

Frequently Asked Questions for St. Mary's Episcopal Church

What do we believe?

We believe:

- that the Holy Scriptures are the revealed word of God, which inspired the human authors of the Scripture, and which is interpreted by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- that the Nicene Creed is the basic statement of our belief about God.
- that the two great sacraments given by Christ to the Church are Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.
- that the teachings and beliefs of the Episcopal Church are articulated in an "Outline of the Faith" in our [*Book of Common Prayer*](#).

The Episcopal Church follows the "via media" or middle way in our theology and discussions because we believe that, whether or not we agree on a particular topic, we all are beloved by God and can have thoughtful and respectful discussions. There are no prerequisites in the Episcopal Church ... everyone is welcome.

We honor tradition and strive to live by the example of Jesus Christ, welcoming friend and stranger alike, helping our neighbors and offering love and forgiveness. The Episcopal Church has two million members in 7,500 congregations. In the Diocese of Pennsylvania (one of five dioceses in the commonwealth), we have more than 35,606 members in 134 congregations. The Anglican Communion has more than 70 million followers.

At St. Mary's Church ...

1. Where are the restrooms?

There are two sets of restrooms that are easily accessible from the church. Our most modernized restrooms are next door in the Parish house. You may walk out the main doors of the church or the side door and enter either door of our Parish House. Once through the doors, take a left and towards the end of the hallway our restrooms will be on the left. There is also an older unisex restroom found in the undercroft of the church. To find this restroom simply walk down the main church aisle towards the altar, and to the right you will see a set of steps going downstairs. Proceed down those stairs, go through the door at the foot of the stairs and take an immediate right then another immediate right and the restroom is on the left.

2. Where is childcare?

A nursery for children from birth through pre-K can be found next door in the Parish House. You may walk out the main doors of the church or the side door and enter either door of our Parish House. Once through the doors, take a left and towards the end of the hallway you will see the nursery on the right.

3. Where do we park?

During the week parking is tricky at St. Mary's. However, on Sundays, you have plenty of options. On Sundays there is free street parking on both Louella Ave. and Lancaster Ave. There is parking at Radnor Middle School and also down Lancaster Ave. at the Republic Bank. From their back parking lot we have steps going onto the St. Mary's property. There are also three parking spots between the Sanctuary and the Parish house. Those are reserved for the handicapped.

4. How do we take communion?

All baptized Christians are welcome to receive communion. But how do we do this at St. Mary's?

Come forward

Come forward to the altar rail and you may either stand or kneel for communion. The ushers are there to guide you and keep the flow of people at a steady rate. In general, if you are seated on the right side of the church, the Epistle side, you will use the right side of the communion rail. If you are seated on the left side of the church, the Gospel side, you will come up to the left side of the communion rail. Once you have received communion or received your blessing you may stand and exit down the side steps on the side of the church to where you are seated.

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How to receive communion

Kneeling or standing, place your hands flat, and in the shape of a cross, palms up.

Receive the bread

The minister will say the words of administration, which often are, "The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven."

Your response is "**Amen.**"

Lift your hands to your mouth (not using your fingers to hold the bread), and eat the bread.

Make the sign of the cross (optional)

Many people [make the sign of the cross](#) *before* receiving each element (the bread and the wine).

Others make the sign of the cross *after* receiving both elements.

You do not have to make the sign of the cross. This is not a rule, it is a custom.

Receive the wine

Next, a chalice bearer (wine person), will approach.

As they approach, if you want to receive the wine, put out your hands to guide the chalice to your lips, and drink. You will want to guide the chalice to your lips to avoid any spills. The chalice bearer is supposed to keep hold of the chalice with you, so that neither of you spills the wine. The chalice bearer will also say the words of administration, which often are, "The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation." Your response, either before or after drinking, is "**Amen.**" If you do not want to receive the wine, cross your arms across your chest as seen in the picture below.

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Other Considerations

Intinction (dipping)

What about dipping the bread? This is called “intinction.”

If you choose to do this, or if the church you are in requires it, you receive the bread as stated above. Then, you take the bread between your fingers, and dip it **slightly** into the wine, before placing it in your mouth.

Receiving a blessing instead of Holy Communion

Adults who are not baptized, or who are not going to receive, can come forward to receive a blessing. If you would like to do so, cross your arms as pictured below.



Children receiving Holy Communion

Like all baptized persons, baptized children are welcomed to receive communion. However, no parent is required to allow their child to receive. If your children are not baptized, or will not be receiving, they can receive a blessing, by crossing their arms as pictured above.

One Last Thing...

After you have received, follow the crowd back to your seat. Our liturgy is not over. Most folks will then pray silently, or sing.